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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Tuesday, July 16, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MORE INSECT QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Another batch of questions about insects has arrived in the mail this week. Among the problem-insects we have to deal with today are termites in the woodwork, ants in the lawn, and fleas on a favorite Persian cat.

Here is one woman who wants to know how to stop termite damage to her house.

Of course, as she realizes, and as most of the rest of us do, too, that is easier said than done. There are a lot of things to consider, and we would suggest she write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture and ask for its Leaflet No. 101, on "Injury to Buildings by Termites."

But, in a general way, here is the answer to her question, as outlined by the entomologists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. They point out one fact in the life history of termites that you want to bear in mind in all your dealings with these blind, subterranean borers-from-within. They can tunnel through the wood and in time honeycomb the wood work even up to the third story. Yet in all their tunneling they have to keep in contact with moisture to live. So the main idea in repairing termite-weakened woodwork, or building to keep the termites out, is to permanently break their connection with their parent colony which may be outside the house in a building having a full basement or within the area enclosed by the foundation of a building where there is only a partial or no excavation.

However, if a leaking pipe or other source of water keeps the woodwork more or less permanently damp, they can keep on living and tunneling and weekening your woodwork after they have been cut off from their usual source of moisture in the soil. That is particularly true in damp basement corners or around leaky pipes in the kitchen or bathroom.

The entomologists say the most effective remedy is to insulate all wood from the ground with concrete. That means that all wooden supports contacting the basement floor and walls should rest on solid masonry.

Other ways to help stop the termites include metal termite shields inserted over the masonry foundation of buildings or around pillars and pipes.

Leaflet No. 101 shows how those and other features of termite proofing are made effective.

So much for the first question. Now let's answer the lady who wants to know how to get rid of ants that build their hills in her front lawn.

The entomologists advise making holes several inches deep and about a foot apart all over the ant hill. Pour 2 or 3 tablespoons of carbon disulphide in each hole. Then close each hole and cover the ground with building paper weighted down with stones. Let the paper stay on several days to be sure all ants are dead.

So much for ants. Now here's a handsome Persian cat with an old, old afflication -- fleas. "How can I keep fleas off my cat permanently?" asks the owner of the cat.

"By applying derris powder frequently," say the entomologists. You can keep either a dog or a cat practically free of fleas by occasionally applying derris powder next to the skin along the back and neck, and on top of the head. A level teaspoon of the powder is enough to kill every flea on a large dog. Use less powder for a small animal like a cat. Derris powder is made from a plant. If used carefully it won't hurt your cat or dog or yourself, but it does an excellent job of killing fleas. Occasionally an animal's stomach is upset by licking the powder off the fur and the material is irritating to the eyes. Derris kills slowly. Don't expect to see the fleas drop off dead as soon as you have put on powder. Pyrethrum powder is another good safe insect killer. The heads of a flower much like chrysanthemum are dried and ground to make this powder for killing insects.

If your cat or dog has a special place to sleep, better clean the fleas out there, too. Creosote oil is a good flea-killer for walls and floors but it stains badly and has a strong odor. It is all right to use outdoors in a barn or in a cellar. You can use naphthalene flakes to kill fleas in a cat's bed or basket indoors. Fleas don't like naphthalene any better than clothes moths do. When a house becomes infested as often happens when pet animals are neglected sprinkle about 5 pounds of naphthalene flakes over the floor of each of the infested rooms. Close all doors and windows and let the room stand undisturbed 24 hours. Then brush up the flakes. After that, if you keep your cat free of fleas, you won't have to worry about any fleas getting loose around the house.

By the way, if you want more information on fleas, you can get it by ordering a free leaflet from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Send a postcard for Leaflet No. 152 called, "How to Control Fleas." Once again: Leaflet No. 152, "How to Control Fleas," from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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